Questions and Answers from the ISTAR Teacher Webinars

1. Assessment

Q: What assessments are required for what grades?

A: ***ISTAR-Alternate Assessment Required Areas:***

Grade Band Assessment 3-5
- *Grade 3 – Math and Language Arts*
- *Grade 4 – Math, Language Arts and Science*
- *Grade 5 – Math, Language Arts and Social Studies*

Grade Band Assessment 6-8
- *Grade 6 – Math, Language Arts and Science*
- *Grade 7 – Math, Language Arts and Social Studies*
- *Grade 8 – Math and Language Arts*

Grade Band Assessment 9-10
- *Grade 9 - Math and Language Arts*
- *Grade 10 – Math and Language Arts and Biology*

Q: What happens if I change the grade level?

A: It will change the level of the assessment only. If the grade level of the student is incorrect on your case manager list it must be changed via STN. I would <u>not</u> recommend changing the "Assessing at Grade Level" when you create an assessment.

Q: Do all students above grade 4 have to be assessed in the academic areas?

A: All students in grades 3-8 and 9 must be assessed in wither ISTEP+, IMAST or ISTAR. Those students who have ISTAR in lieu of ISTEP+ in grades 3-10 must be assessed in the academic areas listed above. The Life Skills and Employability areas were added as meaningful assessments to be used for local proposes, but that data is not pulled for state testing accountability.

Q: High school students that are on a certificate of completion track do not take Biology. How are we to evaluate them on Biology?

A: Alternate Assessments are aligned to the general curriculum. The biology assessment is made up of a progression of skills that are based on the essence of the biology standards.

Q: I use the assessment to show parents of my MH students how they have improved. I have not been able to do this year. Can I use the monitoring page for this task?

A: Yes, the progress monitoring is available once an ISTAR assessment has been finalized.

Q: Did we hear you state that if a student listens to a story that we will mark the student as having a reading skill?

A: Not necessarily. Listening and reading are both skills that are assessed. What I was trying to say is to keep in mind the student's learning and response modalities. If it is a comprehension question, the student can listen to the story and answer the question. If it is a reading skills they must read it.

Q: Is it ok to skip boxes if a student does not know boxes in between-for example can identify numbers up to 100 but does not know how to order them?

A: Yes, the directions on each page states: "Check ALL boxes the best represent the student's demonstrated skills". The assessment is written as a progression of skills, but a student may have splinter skills and are able to perform some skills at the upper end of the performance thread without mastered all of the skills below it.

Q: Is cognitive function required when the exceptionality is Autism?

A: *Cognitive function required for any student who has the purpose "ISTAR Assessment in lieu of STEP+.*

Q: If a student has moved to my school and they only have the PM icon does that mean I need to close that out to create a new ISTAR assessment after 3/1?

A: *If there is an open Progress Monitoring you can either finalize it or delete it and then the star icon should reappear. If you have neither icon, then go to the Contact Support link on the bottom of any page in Learning Connection and fill out a help desk ticket. Give them the STN number of the student and let them know the issue, they will have to fix this for you.*

Q: For students in grade K-2 that are in Life Skills what purpose do we use?

A: *The system is set up so that grades K and 1 use ISTAR KR and starting at second grade, ISTAR Alternate. The KR assessment is the basis of the 3-5 band of the Alternate assessment. The only difference is some of the performance threads at the higher level and that KR is rated differently, one selection per performance thread.*

Q: So we pick the highest level of performance even if it is a splinter skill and boxes below that level might not be marked?

A: *Yes, that is why we changed the scoring last spring to each box instead of the highest level. Only select the performance skill boxes that the student has demonstrated.*

Q: Do we check ALL performance skill boxes that the child demonstrate in the academic areas and check only <u>one</u> performance skill box of the highest achievement on the Life skills/Employability skills areas?

A: *Yes, that is why it is important to read the statement on the top of each page of the assessment. On the academic areas the statement is: "Select <u>ALL</u> rubric skills/boxes per performance thread/row that best represents the student's demonstrated skills". On the Life skills/Employability skills areas the statement is: "Select <u>one</u> rubric skill/box per performance thread/row that best represents the student's highest level of performance".*

Q: Are we able to attach pictures, work samples, and videos to the ISTAR assessment in the Learning Connection?

A: *Yes. There is an attachment icon on each thread and on the assessment map page. When you finalize an assessment, these attachments are available from the student file icon.*

Q: Can you upload video as evidence? Would you want files to be in PDF form?

A: *Once an assessment is finalized, the attachments are available to view from the student file. It is kept in the same format that it was attached, but it cannot be changed so pdf format is not essential. As far as video, yes, it can be attached and viewed from the student file. I would suggest that you keep your video clips short.*

Q: What does "No Evidence" means?

A: *No Evidence means the student has not demonstrated any skills in the thread.*

Q: So we can open an assessment and not finish it in one session? I have been told "DON'T CLICK THE BACK BUTTON when you are in the ISTAR program" How do leave the assessment page?

A: *Save the assessment ratings and then click on the Return to My ISTAR caseload button or click on My ISTAR caseload on the left hand side of the page. To return to the assessment, click on the star icon.*

Q: What if I have an assessment opened before March 1?

A: *These students will not appear on your Compliance Report even if you finalize after March 1, 2011. The Window is from March 1 – April 30, 2011. If you opened an assessment prior to March 1, you will need to either finish and finalized it or delete it and create a new one for it to count for Spring 2011. If you finalize it, when you start a new assessment previous data is stored and you can recheck your ratings and save again between March 1 and April 30, 2011.*

Q: Is it correct to say that each performance skill box that is checked means that the student can do 80% of the behavior objective listed under the icon?

A: *This is the general rule. Keep in mind:*
- *Special education students may have a wide variety of disabilities that may hinder how they respond therefore a student is allowed to respond in any modality.*
- *A rubric box should be checked if the student demonstrates the skills consistently over time.*
- *The student does not have to demonstrate the skill every time.*
- *If the student successfully performed the skills 80% or more of the time without prompts support such as verbal cues or physical guidance, then the rubric box should be checked.*
- *If the student continues to require prompt support to exhibit the skill, the rubric box should not be checked.*

Q: On my caseload some of the students do not have the star icon only the PM icon is that because that student is doing ISTAR is not a primary assessment?

A: No, that usually means that a progress monitoring was started on the student and that it must be finalized or deleted before the star returns. It is the star that is the ISTAR Alternate assessment that must be opened and finalized between Mar 1 and April 30, 2011.

Q: I have a student listed on my caseload but I am not the case manager. When I click on the star I get a message, "Only a Case manager can create an assessment". How do I start the assessment on this student?

A: *You can't, only the case manager can. A case manager is the only one that can create and finalize an assessment and/or progress monitoring. Once they have created/opened an assessment, then you can go in and add your ratings.*

Q: What happens in the event that you document a student has reached 80% on items in a box and check that box, but students loses some of the skills the next time you complete an assessment and as a result you don't check the box.

A: *Use Anecdotal Notes to document why the ratings are different. The yearly ISTAR assessment is a picture of where the student in a given time frame and does not compare growth from one year to the next. You must complete the assessment accurately and professional so if the student regresses, which sometime happens, then the current assessment should reflect that. When you share the summary report with the student parents, the notes will be on this report.*

Q: At the high school level, do we assess both 9th grades and 10th graders during ISTAR window this year?

A: *It is the expectation of the Office of Student Assessment that ISTAR is completed yearly for grade 3-10, but only grade 3-8 and 10 ISTAR data is used for state reporting and are required.*

Q: Is progress monitoring required more often than just the once a year assessment?

A: *The ISTAR assessment is required one time a year. Progress Monitoring is not required by the state, which is a local decision. Progress monitoring is a detailed level rating and is optional.*

Q: So there is no way to use as a potential tool for a 3-8th grader just to gain more information?

A: *Yes, as long as the student is taking either ISTEP+ or IMAST during the state testing window. When the case manager creates the assessment they would select "ISTAR as a potential tool" for the purpose.*

Q: Is there a way for me to change the cognitive functioning level after it has been entered?

A: *Not without either finishing and finalize the open assessment or deleting it. If you finalize it, when you start a new assessment previous data is stored and you can recheck your ratings and save again between March 1 and April 30, 2011. The last assessment finalized in the window will be the data pulled for state reporting.*

Q: Once the student in on your caseload, are the correct assessments automatically put in for you?

A: *The assessment you are presented with for a student is based off on grazed level and purpose you select. The required academic areas will be locked so you cannot uncheck any area. I would <u>not</u> recommend changing the "Assessing at Grade Level" when you create an assessment.*

Q: If a student was assessed in only the areas of Math, Language, and SS last year, can we add other areas this year and what are the criteria for assessing functional skill areas?

A: *Depending on the grade of the student, the area of science may replace social studies as a required assessment. You can select any life skills/employability skills areas you want to assess, but all selected assessment areas must be completed before it can be finalized.*

Q: Will we lose assessment if someone other than the case manager hits the back button?

A: *I am not sure. If the page was saved prior to hitting the back button, I don't believe that the user loses the icon.*

2. Reporting

Q: Will notes print in report and do grade levels print?

A: *Yes to both. Once you finalize an assessment a copy will be added to the student file including notes and the grade pulled from STN*

Q: The old ISTEP use to give a grade level score why did it change?

A: Although the items that made up the ISTAR instrument were direct derivatives of the standard indicators and the items were organized by grade level with the assumption that lower grades were "aligned" to subsequent grades. . Even though the assessment contained items that concurrently would be considered extended standards and would align to details of lower grade levels, the performance score was identified in terms of the lower grade level on the assessment reports. The representation of skills as "off-grade level", as reported in ISTAR, has been specifically prohibited by federal guidance documents. The current matrices of performance level descriptors were created based off these criteria:
1. Determined the essence of each standard to promote access to the general curriculum
2. Determined how this could be achieved at the lowest level of complexity and with the least difficulty
3. Identify the highest learning standards possible for this group of students
4. Designed a continuum of performance level descriptors that filled out the difference

Q: Is there still a "brochure" to print out that describes the ISTAR for parents?

A: *There is one that needs to be updated and will be posted.*

Q: Where it said Math 15/54 is that the score used to determine pass/did not pass?

A: *On the Summary Assessment you will see a total score for Math, ELA , Science and Social Studies. The Pass, Pass+ and Did Not Pass are applied to the Alternate Assessment Student Report that will be available after the assessment window closes.*

Q: Do the print copies found under *Files and Bookmarks* and the *ISTEP+/Assessment* link on the IDOE website include the behavior objective found under the icon on the performance skills boxes?

A: No, there are separate documents. You will find all the behavior objectives are the paper copies of the Progress Monitoring assessments folder.

Q: In the past I was able to access old reports- say 2007. Is this still available?

A: Not yet. This is still in development.

Q: I am concerned about the annual alternate student report. Several of my students will never pass, how we help parents understand the purpose of this?

A: The federal reporting requirement includes a student report that reflects the cut scores for the alternate assessment. I would suggest that you give also share the summary report with the parent and focus on what their child can do.

Q: When you talk about saving the reports, where were you talking about saving them to? I always keep a paper copy, but if I can save a copy that would be good.

A: I suggested that you save a copy to a folder possibly in your documents folder or a share drive at your school.

Q: Teachers will not always have access to paper format of past assessments. I work in middle school and elementary teachers may or may not have made paper copy of ISTAR reports. So as a teacher I cannot show the progress their child made in the last three years.

A: The ISTAR assessment format was changed in February 2009 and the assessment rating requirement was changed last year. I am hoping that before the end of this year, we will have the ability to run a comparison report for assessment since Spring 2011.

Q: Did I understand that the report is automatically attached to the student IEP.

A: NO. ISTAR and ISTART7 are not linked anymore. You will need to go through the ISTART7 IEP program to attach an ISTAR assessment.

Q: Where would I find the cognitive functioning if it doesn't show up?

A: It is not saved from the previous year so you will need to check the student historical evaluation reports.

3. Administration

Q: How do we access private school kids?

A: Here are the steps to follow if the STN is not in your corporation: Instructions for a teacher from corporation A who needs access to a school in corporation B.
   1. *The teacher will need to join the school that she needs access to in this other corporation by going to "Find a Community", select school as type, and find the school by typing in name of school and join.*
   2. *The LC administrator from that corporation will need to grant her/him permission to join the school and also set their ISTAR access to Educator.*
   3. *The ISTAR admin from that corporation will need to assign this teacher to the student or add this teacher on the student's security access*

*Q: W*hen will the change to one criterion occur?

A: The state board approved the combined ISTAR Alternate Assessment criteria on March 2, 2011. This will be included in the director's update via Special Education Administrator Community on Friday, March 11.

Q: Are audits done randomly?

A. There is no schedule to audit at this time, but there may be in the future. The protocol for any type of audit would be directed from the Office of Student Assessment. Currently, no documentation needs to be attached to the assessment, but a starting point could be to review IEP goals and progress on goals and compare with ISTAR assessment ratings.

Q: What do we do if child's grade or demographic info is not correct?

A: Have this information updated through your local STN person?

Q: When will the Compliance Report be available and how will student be added to it?

A: The Compliance Report is available March 1 – April 30, 2011. It will only be populated with students once a case manager creates/opens an ISTAR assessment with the purpose of "ISTAR in lieu of ISTEP+" after March 1, 2011. These students will appear in the incomplete section of the report. The Compliance Report can be found under the ISTAR reports link.

Q: Does the number of boxes checked directly relate to the cut score?

A: Yes

Q: How do I get students on my caseload if they are missing?

A: An ISTAR administrator must assign students to an educator level account or give access to any other user who needs access to rate a student in ISTAR.

Q: How do I give access to other teachers who work with a student?

A: Administrators can only give security access to students - not the teachers. The administrator goes to Add/Find and finds a student and selects the Security Access icon - the shield, and adds this user.

Q: I have a 12 year old boy that they are calling a 7th grader. He just turned 12 in November. He would be a 6th grader right? He is located in our 7th and 8th grade building for services but really a 6th grader by age.

A: Have your special education administrator check with your local STN person. They can do a grade level exception to allow accurate grade levels and school number reporting.

Q: Should we have all current students on our list or just the students who qualify for alternate assessment?

A: Your list should only display students that you are assessing in ISTAR for alternate assessment or for local purposes.

Q: Math and ELA are required for all students, but the rest is optional. My administrator has instructed us in the past to do all categories, but I don't know if that applies to other school districts.

A: The require areas for state reporting are listed at the beginning of this document and they are academics areas only. Life skills and employability skills areas are optional for state reporting, but Local Corporation may decide differently.

Q: Can an administrator see the notes thread without printing a report?

A: Administrators can view student reports from the student file which is available from the Add/find option or from Individual Reports which is available from the ISTAR Reports option. All reports are rendered as a print preview

Q: Can an Administrator run a compliance report for all the ISTAR students in the district?

A: The Compliance Report is available to all users. It will be populated with students who have an assessment with the purpose of "ISTAR in lieu of ISTEP+". Educator level accounts see only their caseload and administrators will see all the students in schools they have administration access to.

Q: If you've had little contact with a student, and they are currently on homebound, does an administrator need to give the homebound teacher access to complete the assessment?

A: *It is a local decision who will complete the assessment, but you are correct that the ISTAR administrator would need to give this user access.*

Q: For speech and hearing, will I go into an assessment that the teacher has started and do only the communication portion?

A: *The case manager needs to create/open the assessment before a user with access can add ratings. As far as what part of the assessment you complete, that is a local decision.*

Q: I have a student who is home schooled. He is not on my case load so do I need to get him added to my caseload or does he not need to be assessed?

A: *Please refer to the ISTEP+ Program manual for guidance on home schooled students (Pg 38). The enrollment requirements for ISTEP+ would be the same for any state assessment.*

4. General

Q: Entered my communities and ISTAR is not one. What am I doing wrong?

A: *To join this community, select the Contacts and Communities tab and click on My Communities from the Learning Connection dashboard. Click on the FIND A COMMUNITY link; keep the Community type as "User Created" and type in ISTAR Alternate Assessment Users and then search. Join this community and you will have access to the training materials I mentioned above when you click on the Files and Bookmarks tab.*

Q: is this webinar going to posted anywhere when completed?

A: *The PowerPoint's, recorded webinars and step by steps are posted on the Alternate Assessment Users Community under the Files and Bookmarks tab and on the ISTEP+/Assessment link under the ISTAR heading/ISTRA Resources.*

Q: We updated our student roster last week and imported that list as well. Student names however are not appearing on the assigned case manager lists. What do we need to do?

A: *For any public school the student do not need to be imported. They need to be correct in the STN/RT system. An ISTAR administrator will need to assign students to case managers via the Add/Find option.*

Q: On the IEP what do we check for the student academic competence or independent functioning?

A: The state board approved the combined ISTAR Alternate Assessment criteria on March 2, 2011. This will be included in the director's update via Special Education Administrator Community on Friday, March 11. For the purpose of the ISTAR assessment we are not pulling that data this year.

Q: I have a caseload, but do not have "classes" for my current school. Is this a problem?

A: *No, the class tab is part of Learning Connection and is not associated with the ISTAR application.*